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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 QUITO 001255

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EC](#)

SUBJECT: CONGRESS BACK IN MAJORITY'S HANDS

REF: A. QUITO 947

[B](#). QUITO 1058

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: With the reorganization of the legislative commissions on May 26, the current majority coalition, made up of the Social Christian Party (PSC), the Democratic Left (ID), and Pachakutik (PK), consolidated its control of Congress. Deputies from these three parties now hold the congressional presidency and both vice-presidencies, and preside over all 18 commissions of Congress. This reorganization proceeded under the guise of necessity, but represents Congressional power politics-as-usual. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) The pretext for this restructuring of Congressional leadership and committee positions was the dismissal of 15 delegates for various reasons (reftels). The new leadership of Congress is expected to hold power until January 4, 2007, when the next Congress takes office.

Majority Presides Over All 18 Legislative Commissions

[1](#)3. (U) The PSC now presides over nine congressional committees including the Civil and Criminal Commission, headed by Luis Fernando Torres; and the International Affairs and National Defense Commission, led by Alfredo Serrano. The ID now holds five commissions' presidencies, including the Labor Commission, presided over by Andres Paez, and the Economic Commission, which will be dealing with oil sector reform. Paez took over the Commission saying that the free trade agreement would be a priority. Deputies of the Pachakutik party hold the presidencies of the Human Rights, Indigenous Affairs, Health and Environment, and Amazon Affairs Commissions. 11 committees, including International Affairs, Labor, and Civil and Criminal, are made up exclusively of deputies from the PSC, IC, and PK.

Majority Heads Up Administration of Congress

[1](#)4. (U) The majority parties also hold Congress' leadership positions: the president of Congress, Wilfrido Lucero, is a member of the ID; Cynthia Viteri of the PSC is the first vice-president; and on May 26, Jorge Guaman of PK was elected as the second vice-president of Congress. Guaman stated that his first priority as the new second vice-president would be to set forth points of dialogue with the Executive in order to establish an agenda of consensus. Guaman also criticized the redistribution of the commissions, saying that it was unfortunate that other parties were not given greater representation. Although the PRE, Prian, MPD, SP, and PSE hold no commission presidencies, they can still work hard and, with their actions, break the majority's hegemony, he noted.

Reorganization Denounced As Political Revenge

[1](#)5. (U) The minority parties accused the majority of carrying out this redistribution for political revenge against the former, pro-Gutierrez majority. Leaders of the new majority justified their actions. Pascual del Cioppo, leader of the Social Christian block said that the majority had to prevail in the restructuring, as the old majority had done under Gutierrez in January. The head of the ID block, Jorge Sanchez, claimed that the commissions were reorganized because they had not been functioning since January. However, Luis Villacis (MPD), the ex-president of the Labor and Social Commission, charged that the restructuring violated the constitution, because members of the legislative administration are normally elected for a two-year term.

Comment

[1](#)6. (SBU) Though the majority now firmly controls the leadership of Congress, they only hold a 53% majority of seats in the legislature. The Congressional reorganization represents a continuation of Ecuador's grand tradition of power politics. By using its slim margin to seize near-total control of Congress, the PSC-ID-PK block has fashioned a temporary majority which will likely support the GOE, at

least initially. Experience has proven these alliances to be vulnerable to internal divisions and growing resentment by the minority, which feeds public discredit of the legislative branch.

17. (SBU) However, we see some potential bright spots in the reorganization. The ID's Andres Paez is a close and respected contact of the Embassy. We see good prospects of working with him on the labor front; he is one of the few members of Congress who has actively followed the FTA negotiations to date, and has been supportive of our labor rights agenda. Torres is a lawyer and legislator who could be helpful in passing pending TIP legislation. We will also engage with Serrano of the International Affairs Commission to discuss Article 98 and other USG interests.
Kenney